

# INTRODUCTION OF THE ROCK CREEK NATIONAL PARK ACT OF 2021

## HON. ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON

OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, September 27, 2021

Ms. NORTON. Madam Speaker, today, I rise to introduce a bill to redesignate the National Park Service (NPS)-owned Rock Creek Park in the District of Columbia as "Rock Creek National Park." Renaming this park will highlight its significance to the nation, including visitors to the nation's capital, and will draw much-needed funding for the park's inviting trails, waterways and other unique features.

Rock Creek Park is already a "national" park, as it was established by Congress in 1890 "for the benefit and enjoyment of the people of the United States." Rock Creek Park was the first federally managed urban park and the third federal park ever created, after Yellowstone and Sequoia. Rock Creek Park was designed to preserve animals, timber, forestry and other interests in the park, and to ensure that its natural state is maintained as much as possible not only for D.C. residents, but for all Americans. The park also preserves the ancient history of the land, as it was used for temporary settlements and as a quarry for weapons and tools by Native Americans from 7000 BCE until the 1600s.

Since Congress first designated Rock Creek Park, several structures and properties have been established or donated to further preserve Rock Creek Park, creating a vast connected park area that falls under a central NPS jurisdiction. In 1892, the federal government acquired Peirce Mill in Rock Creek Park, one of the mills used by local farmers during the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries. In 1950, the Old Stone House located in Georgetown, with its great pre-Revolutionary War architecture, was acquired by the park. The building was restored and programs explain the house's rich history from the colonial period to the present day. The Fort Circle Parks were also acquired to interpret and preserve the Civil War Defenses of Washington, which created a ring of protection for the nation's capital during the Civil War. The Carter Barron Amphitheater, established in honor of the 150th anniversary of the nation's capital, became an integral part of D.C.'s live music scene, and has featured acts including Ella Fitzgerald, Diana Ross and Earth, Wind and Fire, as well as local artists. The redesignated "Rock Creek National Park" would encompass these later additions to the park.

Today, Rock Creek Park offers residents of D.C., Maryland and Northern Virginia, as well as thousands of visitors, an escape from our increasingly urban environment. Residents and tourists alike enjoy many activities in the park's 2,000 acres, including hiking and biking on the historical trails, horseback riding, picnicking, tennis and other recreational activities in some of the open fields. Our residents have expressed their appreciation by volunteering to clean up and maintain the forests, trails and waterways.

In 1918, landscape architects John Charles Olmstead and Frederick Law Olmstead, Jr. wrote of Rock Creek Park, "No matter how perfect the scenery of the park may be or may

become, no matter how high its potential value, that value remains potential except insofar as it is enjoyed by large and ever larger numbers of people, poor and rich alike." Redesignating Rock Creek Park as Rock Creek National Park will help recognize the national status of the park and protect and revitalize this remarkable resource in our nation's capital.

I strongly urge my colleagues to support this legislation.

## H.R. 4350, NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2022

## HON. PETER A. DeFAZIO

OF OREGON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, September 27, 2021

Mr. DeFAZIO. Madam Speaker, on September 23, I voted in opposition to H.R. 4350, the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year (FY) 2022. While I support several Democratic policy priorities included in this legislation, I also have significant concerns with numerous provisions, including the irresponsibly bloated topline defense spending of \$768 billion that this legislation authorizes.

I strongly support the well-deserved 2.7 percent pay raise that this legislation grants our men and women in uniform. This is the very least we can do for those who continue to make extraordinary sacrifices for our country.

This legislation includes additional vital benefits for military servicemembers and their families, such as expanded parental leave, improved mental health care services, a new basic needs allowance for lower income servicemembers, and more.

I also strongly support the provisions included to combat the scourge of sexual assault in the military, including by creating an Office of Special Victim Prosecutor to prosecute these crimes, removing the commanding officer from decisions related to sexual assault, and finally criminalizing sexual harassment under the Uniform Code of Military Justice.

As a long-time advocate for strengthening Congress's constitutional war powers authorities and limiting executive authority to engage in armed conflict without Congress's consent, I cosponsored an amendment to prohibit unauthorized U.S. participation in the Saudi-led coalition's war in Yemen. I am pleased that this amendment passed the House and will push my colleagues to keep this amendment in the final NOAA conference legislation.

While I strongly support provisions in this year's NDAA, I ultimately voted against it because I believe this legislation should have included additional provisions to rein in our bloated and wasteful defense spending, take back Congress's constitutional war powers authority, and more.

Instead of increasing the defense budget by several billion dollars for yet another year in a row, I strongly believe this legislation could have made responsible cuts to our defense budget without jeopardizing the safety of our troops or undermining our national security. It's beyond time for us to invest in domestic priorities for Oregonians and the American people here at home.

That's why I supported an amendment to responsibly reduce the Pentagon budget while retaining exceptions to protect service members, civilian employees, and the vital Defense Health Program from this reduction. Unfortunately, this amendment failed to pass the House.

For years, Congress has continued to increase the Pentagon's budget despite overwhelming evidence of its waste, fraud, and abuse of taxpayer money. It's absolutely ridiculous and irresponsible to continue throwing increasing amounts of taxpayer money at the Pentagon and lining the pockets of greedy defense contractors and special interests every year, when the Pentagon cannot even account for where this money goes.

I have long supported a financial audit of the Pentagon. Unlike every other federal agency, the DOD has yet to ever pass a financial audit. For three years in a row, the Pentagon has spectacularly failed full audits, each of which highlighted numerous examples of waste and abuse. It is ridiculous to provide the Pentagon a massive spending increase—as this bill does—when the Pentagon cannot even account for how it spends taxpayer money. That's why I'm a cosponsor of legislation to require and incentivize every component of the DOD to finally pass an audit.

This legislation should have included more provisions to take back Congress's constitutional war powers authority, including repealing the long-outdated 2001 and 2002 authorizations for the use of military force (AUMFs). I also cosponsored and voted in favor of an amendment to end unauthorized U.S. military involvement in Syria. The U.S. military has maintained a years-long presence in Syria without congressional approval, in contravention of the Constitution and the War Powers Resolution of 1973. While this amendment unfortunately failed, I will continue fighting to stop this unauthorized, endless war.

I am also disappointed that amendments I supported either failed to pass the House or were not made in order. This includes amendments to curb the irresponsible expansion of U.S. nuclear weapons, to strengthen Buy America provisions to ensure the military supports U.S. manufacturers, to ensure veterans who were wrongfully dishonorably discharged for their sexual orientation are able to receive the veterans benefits they earned, and more.

I also strongly oppose provisions in this legislation that would expand military draft registration to all Americans aged 18–25, including women. I have long opposed military draft registration and have introduced legislation to repeal the Selective Service System (SSS) altogether. The SSS is an archaic, unnecessary, unwanted, and wasteful bureaucracy that violates Americans' civil liberties and subjects Americans who fail to register—largely through no fault of their own—with unnecessarily severe, lifelong penalties, all without due process. These penalties can include denial of employment, job training, educational benefits, student loans, grants, citizenship, driver's licenses, and more—at both the federal and state levels—and they disproportionately affect low income individuals and people of color.

The military itself and presidents of both parties have consistently agreed there is no military or national security imperative to ever reinstate a draft.

That's why I co-lead amendments to repeal military draft registration and eliminate these